

Newsies My Way

by RogueJai

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Summary: The movie, re-written to account for a new character; Christina Susan Kelly, Jack's lil' sis. In progress.

Newsies My Way

Okay. Me, myself, RogueJai, is the author of this. All characters (except Chris) belong to Disney, which is proclaimed evil for taking Newsies away. This is nothing more or less than my vision of the video, though it is unfinished and mushy/romantic/kissy. J Enjoy Oh yeah---the Newsies and Davj&co are already acquainted.

>
 Jack looked around the street. People are wrong when they said that this city never sleeps, he thought to himself. It's always sleepy around this time of night. Lazy.

>"Hey, cowboy. How's it goin'?" Jack started. As finely tuned as his senses were, the 17 year-old hadn't even heard Conlan. Then again, who could?
"I've been better. I'm worried about Chris." Jack replied.

>Spot snorted in mild amusement. "I don't know if you should be worried or not. That kid sister of yours she's smart enough for fourteen, but she loves trouble. Oscar's looking for her. He's not too happy with the Princess." Spot shrugged. "Then again, she could just be over at Medda's, or Davy's, for that matter. You know her."
 "Couldn't Morris side-track Oscar? I don't like him, but that half of the Delancey twins usually comes through for Chris." Quickly changing the subject, Jack casually asked, "How bad were your papes today?"

> "Smart mouth. You know. No newses, no sellses.." Spot punched Jack playfully, then sighed.
"Well, see ya 'round, Kelly." Jack smiled as he watched his best friend slink into the shadows and disappear. He and Spot had been buddies forever, even back before Jack's mom had died. With a medium height, more 5'7'' than 5'6'', dark gold-brown hair that shone, and icy blue-green eyes, Spot Conlan was easily one of the better-looking newsies this half of New York state. Though at 6 foot, with brown hair and his mother's hazel eyes, Jack Kelly didn't look so bad himself. Now, however, cloaked with the shadows of evening, eyes hooded and dark, leaning against the lamppost in front

of Jake's Boarding House for Boys, no girl, no matter how brave, would've approached him. He looked too dangerous, reflecting too much of how life on the street was for a kid barely seventeen. How most kids, many boys and a few girls, turned hard before ten. Most, however, wasn't a category that applied to Christina-Susan Kelly-or Princess, as she was called by close friends.

> From a distance she could almost, almost be taken for a guy, with her long brown hair pulled up, stuffed under a cap, and soft, comfortable clothes hiding her figure. Get closer, and you see the girlishness in her face, the tell-tell shape of arms, hands, and slender neck that whispered girl, girl, girl, so quietly that, if you weren't listening, you wouldn't hear the little voice. Closer still, see how small she was, five one, a little less. You would also glimpse the resemblance to both her parents and her brother, the same expressive hazel eyes, the same shape of face. But she was not vulnerable. During all this looking, not once would the word vulnerable enter your mind. She was strong for her size, and could be as tough as anyone else-when she had to be.
 Much later in the evening, almost approaching full dark, Jack watched his sister stroll casually down the street. As she came nearer, he sank even further into those ever-useful shadows. Chris knew he was there. She didn't try to step past him. Chris knew full well what her brother was going to say.

> "Hey, Princess."
 "Hey Cowboy." She replied coolly. "So," Jack continued in a low voice, "just what have you been up to-for the past three days!!" Despite his efforts to stay calm, the last half of Jack's sentence came out a near-shout.

>Chris sighed. "Nowhere and everywhere." That particular phrase meant 'I don't want to talk about it' which also translated into 'Keeping away from Mr. Oscar Delancey.'
 Jack wasn't going to argue about it. "Okay. Go upstairs-you look like you could use some sleep"

> "Just like that. You aren't mad or anything."
 "How could I be when I know it's not your fault?" Jack immediately realized he had said too much.

>"I'll kill him." Chris breathed angrily.
"Who?" Jack questioned, as if he didn't know.

>"One Spot Conlan, age seventeen, that's who."
 "I would've found out anyway."

> She glared at him. "Yes, but you would found out after the fact."

Jack grinned irreverently. "Heck yeah. Now I'm serious. Go inside." Chris winced slightly, started to protest, but Jack cut her off and motioned to the attic window of Jake's. Watched his sister scamper up the drainpipe, onto the roof, and through the third story window.

>He then started off in the general direction of Davy, Les, and Sara's house.

>
 Chris looked around the small room happily, enjoying the sensation of being home. Jake's House was a three story building, with the "cafeteria", common area, and Jake's room on the bottom floor, the boy's dorm on the middle floor, and the attic on top. The attic consisted of several small rooms, used to store food, knickknacks, and other things. Two of the rooms had been converted into bedrooms for the occasional girl who stopped by. Chris had, naturally, chosen the room with the trapdoor and window. The trapdoor led down a ladder to the boys' main room.

>Chris had just turned her back to the window when she heard a deep, all too familiar voice say "Why, hello, Princess. Imagine meeting you here." And then, confirming her suspicions, an arm wrapped around her waist and a small pocket knife dug into Chris's back.
 Trying not to let her fear show, Chris calmly said, "Hello, Oscar. I can imagine

too well. What do you want?"

> "Your boyfriend got smart with me yesterday."
 "Oh? Which one?"

> "That little shrimp, Race,"
Despite herself, Chris grinned a little, at the image of Race as her boyfriend, then, more soberly, said, "I think you know as well as I do that I haven't had a boyfriend in a long time, Oscar about two years tomorrow, in fact."

>The compact, lean sixteen year-old behind her just grunted, then asked, almost casually, "Just how were you planning to get away from me?"
"Like this." The new voice was hard-but not quite so hard as the pieces of blue-green crystal glaring into Oscar's back. Slowly, reluctantly, Oscar backed away from Chris. He knew from personal experience that he wasn't a match for Spot Conlan's well-polished fighting skills. Muttering threats, Oscar backed out the window and fled. Then, and only then, did Spot drop his "tough guy" look and walk over to Chris. She was trembling violently, and he hesitantly put his arm around her, holding her gently. Few were the times she let anyone but Jack put an arm 'round her. Carry her, yes, she'd let a perfect stranger do that, but embrace her? Almost never

>"That was too close, Chris." He said it as a statement, not a question, and immediately regretted the ice in his voice. He shouldn't have been so sharp-now, when she was still, most likely, scared. Spot's face was grim; Chris'd been tolerating Oscar's threats-and carried out threats-for the aforesaid two years; too long, in anybody's book. Something had to give, and soon. It wasn't just Oscar and Chris; the tension was building up everywhere in New York.
Glancing down at Chris, her arms wrapped tightly around his neck and her face white, Spot was shocked at how much she reminded him of a little girl-No, that's not right, he thought, it's that we forget too often that she's still just a kid; we all are, really. "Hey, Chris." Spot murmured quietly. "Come on, Princess, you need your beauty sleep."

>"Spot, how on earth can I sle-eep!" Chris's voice started softly but jumped when Spot picked her up and carried her to her bed. She wasn't surprised at being carried-she had long since gotten used to being picked up. Living in a house full of boys who were her close friends would do that to a girl, especially one as small and light as Chris. He laid her down gently, then whispered good night and slipped out the window, closing it behind him.

> Jack got back late, even more so than usual, and was surprised to see anyone up, especially Spot, who should've been back in Brooklyn long ago. Conlan's face was bleak, much, much too bleak. Jack had a bleak feeling about that bleakness. "Where is she?" He asked breathlessly, afraid of the answer.
Spot's voice was low, "She's upstairs asleep, for now. But Oscar was waiting in her room for her, and he had a knife." Jack's voice caught in his throat. Somehow, he knew that Spot'd been there, right where he was needed.

>"How'd you know he was there?"
"I didn't. It was just a feeling that I should come back over here."

>Jack smiled in relief. "What on earth would the world do without your hunches? Maybe someday you should tell Racetrack which horse to bet on." Spot returned the smile wryly; all of New York's street boys knew about his nearly magical intuition.
Glancing at the clock, Spot winced. "Guess I'll be staying in this dump tonight. You know, over at Brooklyn we have real accommodations . . . feathered beds, riverside view, the works"

>"In your dreams, maybe, but the real fine features are up here, and in Queens, perhaps. . . . " Jack grinned. The two friends had been arguing over who's home was better since they had been four years

old.

>Chris awoke at the sensation of something small and light jumping on her bed. She opened her eyes to see Les, his 9 year-old face shining.
 "Whatcha doin', Chris?" His piping voice was excited, happy, and carefree. Chris remembered that today was Tuesday, the one day of the week that Les was allowed to sell papers with Jack and Davy.

>Yawning, she grinned at him. "Hey, kid, you look excited. Is something good happening today?"
Les frowned at her, then sighed dramatically, "No, I don't think so, let me check the pages . . . !"

>Chris smiled again. "Les, if you're not careful, you could grow up like, I dunno, Jack. You can almost be more sarcastic than Cowboy himself!"
Les smirked knowingly, "Taught me everything I know. Are we going down to the dock today?"

>"Mmm, you'll have to take that one up with my brother." Chris almost said more, when a voice from the dorm cut her off-"Hey CHRIS! You up yet!!?" Chris poked her head down through the trapdoor to see Mush standing authoritatively in the doorway that led to the stairs.
"Yeah! Gimme five minutes!" and then said, more quietly, to Les, "Scram, I need to get dressed. Meet you downstairs!" Les slid down the ladder and followed Mush to the ground level. After taking a sponge bath (real baths could be taken Saturday only), brushing her hair, and putting on some more of those old, comfortable clothes, Chris went through the window and met the others-Les, Davy, Mush, Race, Crutchy, Jack, Snipeshooter, Skittery, Boots, and Spot?--on the street, just as Jack started to herd everyone in the direction of the Brooklyn Bridge.

>"Hurry up, folks. If Spot don't get home by lunch time, he'll faint from bein' homesick." That got a few laughs all around, and the small group started walking towards Brooklyn at a steady pace. Chris found herself in the center of the group, with Jack and Spot on either side. Whether they knew it or not, they were being over-protective. Chris sighed, knowing the routine all too well: they would be worried for at least a week, and then, only then, give her freedom back. Though a small part of her had to admit that right now, she was quite happy for the defensive atmosphere. When they came in sight of the Brooklyn Bridge, Spot bade them good-bye, and, as was his habit, disappeared without a trace. The gang then walked on to the docks, whistling and joking with one another, though Chris did notice that Boots moved up to take Spot's place.
 Finally, they came in sight of the docks this side of the East River. The cluster of newsboys usually hung out at Jake's, but every so often they felt a need to wander somewhere else-and though not in the best of neighborhoods, the docks were one of the best places for pastimes.

> Chris sat on the dock, swinging her legs over the water. Mush, long on height and humor, short on dark, curly hair, which happened to be plastered to his head from swimming, sat down next to Chris and good-naturedly tried to put an arm around her; she pushed him into the river just as amiably. Suddenly, two sets of hands shoved from behind, but before she landed in the water, Chris managed to grab two of the hands, pulling both Jack and Davy in with her. Davy came up sputtering, but Jack rose under Chris, picking her up and tossing her high into the air. Chris came down with a splash, and tried not to laugh-but all three boys were, and their laughter, the right kind of laughter, not mean nor hard, was infectious.
 Chris pulled herself back up onto the dock content with the world. Sure there were problems, sometimes big ones (hint, hint, Oscar) but right now they were out of the way. Chris gave a deep, regretful sigh as she stood up, and with the rest of the group, started walking back home. The

newsies needed to get their papers, and it was nearly time for Chris to begin her two shifts work as one of Pulitzer's secretaries.

>
 Spot Conlan frowned at the new guy from Queens. Unlike the rest of the gang, all the problems in the world were his right now. Contrary to most other newsboy gangs or groups, where everyone took care of himself, (or the occasional herself), Brooklyn's newsies were organized-and Spot was their leader. Not by choice-he'd just as soon walk alone into downtown West Side-but he couldn't really do

>anything that would ruin his reputation, such as dumping Brooklyn. Consequently, each and every day he had to listen to an hour's worth of gripes from guys he who weren't precisely his friends. They followed Spot, not out of friendship or loyalty, but out of a grudging respect.
 Oh, glory, he thought, I've been back ten minutes and already I'm starting to mentally curse at 'em-and I'm ready to swear out loud. Spot held up his hand to stop the next kid, and escaped to the newspaper office, ready to buy his papes an hour early-ready to do anything to get away.

>
 Chris ran as far as the dressing room, the one reserved for secretaries, and breathlessly changed from her soft street clothes into the stiff, white dress Pulitzer required his female staff to wear. Rushing back out through the main floor lobby, Chris gave Mr. Sikes a grin. Unlike Pulitzer and most of his stooges, Sikes was a fairly good guy-though he wouldn't stand up to Pulitzer if they came to a difference of opinions. Sikes had white hair and was a rather thickset old man, but he was kind, the grandfatherly type, and trained everyone who worked in Pulitzer's office, with the exception of the "scabbers," a group of iron-hard boys and men who worked exclusively for Pulitzer, and acted as shock troops when a newsie or three got out of line. Oscar and his brother were both scabs. Unfortunately, they were also both in the office when Chris got there.

>Oscar gave her a snide leer, and grinned evilly, saying "Hey, look who's here! If it ain't the Princess herself. What you doing, kid? Waitin' for yer Guardian Angel to rescue you?"
Morris broke in before Oscar could say any more, "Aw, lay off, Oscar. She's had enough of you for a day." Oscar turned to say something nasty to his brother, but Mr. Pulitzer came in, muttering about the headlines. "Christina, straighten up that mess in the meeting room; I'll need that place tidy tonight."

> "Yes Mr. Pulitzer."
 "Oscar, Morris, you need to go out and get your papes. Can't have newsboys lazing around and bothering my secretaries, can I?"

> "No Sir!"
 "Good . Now get out there. Christina, if any visitors come, I am in my private office." Chris nodded sharply, the slipped into the meeting hall. Sometimes, she thought, I wish I had a different job, even just a different boss!

>

> As Jack waited impatiently for the World gates to open, he brooded over last night-and eventually gave up trying to name how much he and Spot owed each other, how often they'd saved each other's lives. There just wasn't a way to count stuff like that; and there also wasn't a way to number how many times Chris'd talked them both out of running away, or something as crazy. I guess, he mused as the iron wrought gates creaked, that when all you've got left is each other, you don't hold anything back, you stick together like glue, like family. For instance, it was rare for Jack not to tell Spot or Chris something, and vice versa. Chris and Jack both knew Spot's deepest secret-and why he would never work for Pulitzer's World.

> Jack grinned nastily at Mr. "Weasel", the Distribution Officer for the World. "So did you miss me, Weasel? And yet, did you miss me?"

 "Hold yer tongue, and the name's Wiesel-Mr. Wiesel to you. How many?"

> "Just a minute, I'm cruisin' the merchandise, Mr. Weasel." Jack took out a quarter and slammed it on the counter.
 "The usual." He said. Wiesel sighed. Why do I put up with this kid? He wondered. "Fifty papes for the Wise Guy. Who's next?"

>

>Mr. Pulitzer swiveled his black leather chair around to face his subordinates, Sikes and Jacalson.
 "Trolley Strike Drags on for Third Week," he read, "and this headline drags on for infinity."

> "News is slow, Mr. Pulitzer. The trolley strike's all we got." Sikes responded after a prolonged pause.
 "Well, that's all Mr. William Hurst has, but look how he covers the strike! 'Burned Corpse found on Trolley Rails!'"

> "We'll get a new headline writer sir." Jacalson stuttered sheepishly.
 "Steal Hurst's man; offer him double."

> "That's how he stole him from us." Sikes put in. Pulitzer stood up and faced his window, then dismissed both of his subordinates by stating, "There's a lot of money out in those streets, gentlemen. I want to know how to get more of it-by tonight."

> Jack, Davy, and Les were selling papes to the crowd around the fighting ring when Jack caught sight of Snider. "Run!" he yelled.
 The boys followed him, Snider close behind, shouting, "Sullivan! Kelly! Whoever you are, wait till I get you back to the refuge!"

> "I'm not running any further," Davy panted. "I want answers. Who was that, and why was he chasing you?!"
 "The guy chasing me is Snider. He's the warden of a kid's jail-refuge-that I had to stay in for a while 'cause I stole some food. He called me Sullivan /Kelly because he also wants a guy that lives over in the Bronx that looks like me. Chris's seen him. Says you can't tell it's not me from a distance. Satisfied?"

> "Yeah."

>
 Chris slipped into the secretaries' room with a happy sigh, pulling off that awful dress and putting on her wonderful street clothes in a hurry-Jack and the gang were meeting over at Medda's place.

> Spot scanned the hall nervously, for any sign of Pulitzer. "Are you having fun, Chris?" He growled through the door.
 "Yeow!"

> "What happened?" Chris came out the door and showed him the offending object-a hairpin. Apparently she'd been putting her hair up when his voice startled her. "C'mon, let's get outta here." He grumbled. Chris pulled her floppy cap down on her head, nodded sharply, and they were out a back door (one of several) before anyone knew they were there.

> Chris sighed as she glanced back at the sign that read "Medda; Swedish Meadow Lark."
 "Walk you home?" Chris jumped at Spot's voice. "Hunh? Oh, sure." They started walking back at a slow, easy pace.

> "You're in a good mood today." she commented gently.
 "Of course." he grimaced, "After all, who wouldn't be? I swear, if I have to listen to one more complaint from Brooklyn, I'll go crazy. Flat-out insane."

> "Oh, poor Spot." Chris teased.
 "C'mere, you!" he threatened, playfully reaching for her and missing.

> "Catch me-if you can!" Chris dodged him again, climbing quickly up

the side of Jake's House. Spot got in through the window before she could close it, and then sat on her bed, laughing. Chris smiled indulgently, then took the pins out of her hair and started to brush it absently.
 "Chris."

> "Hmm?" She turned toward him questioningly, then gasped as he stood up and grabbed her hands, pulling her close. Before Chris could say anything, Spot was kissing her gently, surprising her so much that she dropped the brush. Spot pulled away and disappeared into the night in less time than it took a heart to beat. Chris flopped down on her bed and groaned. She'd known how he felt, of course, but why did he have to show it? She had been more than happy with being friends. Chris pressed her lips together in vexation, but decided not to do any more pressing-she could still taste Spot's kiss.

>
Spot found himself walking towards Medda's place, knowing Jack wasn't there and yet hoping to run into him.

> "Hey Spot!" Jack took a closer look at the scowl on his friend's face and started laughing; he knew exactly what had happened.
 "I know I'm an idiot; you don't have to rub it in. What'm I gonna do now?!"

> "Well," Jack answered, "it's kind of like showing someone your ace in a card game-you just have to play out the rest of the hand."
 "You're a big help."

> "No, I'm serious. What would you usually do?"
"Duh, I'd stay away from this part of town for a month or so."

>"Okay then, instead of avoiding her, go talk to her."
 "What? You selling tickets? 'Come one, come all, to see Spot Conlan get his head ripped off by a girl?'"

> "Would I really do that?"
 "In a heartbeat."

> "Your enthusiasm is astonishing."

>Jack knocked on the trapdoor, and opened it anyway when Chris didn't answer.
"Go away, whoever you are. And if you're my brother, go away please."

>"I am your brother, and I'm not going anywhere until you talk to me." Chris groaned and sat up enough to glare at Jack.
"Fine. Have it your way. I'll talk. But I refuse to mention his name."

>"Are you really all that mad at Sp . . . I mean him?"
Chris crossed her eyes in torment. "Yes, no, maybe so . . . I dunno!" Jack laughed softly at that.

>She scowled at him. "Why can't he keep his feelings to himself?"
"Would you have preferred it if he did?" Jack asked softly.

>Chris closed her eyes and thought hard. "No."she finally whispered before Jack slid down the ladder.

>The next morning, long before light touched the horizon, Chris rolled over, looked up, and closed her eyes again. "I'm not talking to you today."
 "Wanna bet?" Spot picked up her pillow, put it in his lap, and sat on the bed. Chris sighed and laid down again, this time with her head in his lap. Spot, being himself, a guy with no sense of timing whatsoever, leaned down and kissed her gently.

> "Stop it. I'm trying to think and you're distracting me."
 "Does that mean you like my kisses?"

> "It might." Chris sighed again and sat up, knowing that he would not let her get any more sleep. In that she was correct-he pulled her into his arms, and Chris found herself laying her head on his shoulder. Chris gave a deep sigh and strode to the window, the false light, just before dawn, giving her countenance a tender, unshielded cast. Spot came up beside her, encircled her loosely with his long arms. Chris muttered something, but Spot didn't hear. His attention was focused on a glitter of silver at her neck. He pulled the chain

into his hands, until the silver locket came up.
Spot groaned in a pain that was almost physical. Three years since Oscar had given her that locket. There had never been anything in it; the locket itself was enough. I was that close, Spot cursed himself, I was that close to her. Curiosity killed the cat, and now

>"Chris." His voice was firm, but to his complete surprise she tried to pull away. "Do you love me?" Spot murmured. She gasped, and ceased to struggle.
"That's not fair Spot!" She protested in a hoarse, choked whisper before burying her head in his shoulder. After waiting for five minutes (or was infinity?) he heard a small, broken whisper. Smiling with relief, Spot hugged her closer. Did anyone really know the power of one little word? And what would he have done if that one word had been even smaller, two letters, not three, a "no" instead of a "yes"? It didn't matter. In one fluid movement Spot picked her up and sat on the bed, cradling Chris in his lap. Spot sighed and stood up, dumping Chris unceremoniously on her bed. She was deep enough in sleep that she didn't even notice.

>
Later that day, at the office, Chris took Oscar's satire in silence, 'til Pulitzer's voice called for Delancey. She stared after him, bemused. No one else was in the room at the moment; a rare opportunity. Chris's hand went to the locket at her throat. With a single, sharp pull the chain broke and slipped from her hand into the garbage can.

>

>"Lookit it! Lookit it!" One of Pulitzer's maids-the one who emptied garbage cans-exclaimed to a colleague in a heavy English accent.

"I'll be! She's over 'im! She's lettin' 'im go! Can you believe it! Blooming, isn't it?"

>Chris changed quickly and slipped out a back door. From the look one of the maids had given her, the news was out. They say, she thought, that news travels fast in small towns. It travels faster here.

>They were all settled in Jake's common room. Some of the boys were roughhousing, and Chris and Spot were talking and laughing quietly in a corner. Watching them, Mush said to Race "How much you wanna bet she takes him?"
Race shook his head. "She won't accept him! She ain't taken no one as a boyfriend since Delancey!"

>"Quarter says she'll take him."
"I'll meet that bet."

>
 Jake took out his fiddle, his cook sat down at the piano, and people-newsies and their girls-moved out into the middle of the floor. The lights were dimmed slightly, and suddenly Chris and Spot were standing up. Spot grabbed her hand as if to pull Chris out on the dance floor, but kissed her instead for an endless moment. Mush snapped his fingers at Race for the quarter, but Race said, "If she dances with him, I lose the bet. If she slaps him and walks away, you lose." Mush nodded.

> Spot pulled away. You could hear the sound of jaws dropping and hitting the floor as Jake started a slow song and the floor cleared, leaving only Spot and Chris dancing. From the looks in their eyes, the room could have been empty save for each other.
 "You can't weasel out of it now, Race!" Mush chuckled, and Race grudgingly handed over the quarter.

>
 "Chris, wake up." Spot looked down at the girl sitting in his lap. She opened one eye enough to see that the room was mostly empty, then shut her eye again and snuggled closer.

> "Jack, your sister is a pain."
 "Not my problem. You're her boyfriend."

> Spot glared, but he couldn't do much. Chris stirred, and he turned his attention back to her. "I am not a pain." She muttered at him

reproachfully.
 "Sorry." He murmured softly, rubbing her hand.
> "Stop that."
 "No."
> "Why, you--" she started, but never finished, because he put his hand over her mouth and shushed her. Chris scowled, but he was stronger than she was. And looking around, she was glad for it. Pulitzer was apparently making a tour of newsie's homes, 'cause he was standing not twelve feet away. And Spot his face was tight and bleak. Jack moved in front of them slightly, blocking Pulitzer's view. His right hand motioned for them to get out. Quickly. Sticking to the shadows, they slipped out the door and up to Chris's room.
 Spot sat down on the bed. Hard. Chris sat down beside him, and gently put her arms around him. It was Spot's turn to bury his head on her shoulder. He was shaking
> "C'mon." Chris said suddenly.
 "Wha"
> "We're dancing."
 "No music"
> "Doesn't matter." She told him firmly. They danced around the room until Jack came and lay down on the bed. Chris led Spot back to the bed, sat down as Jack reluctantly sat up.
 "You okay?" He asked Spot. Spot nodded his head but his hand was trembling just a little bit. Jack studied his friend, but said nothing more. If anyone could handle and take care of Spot, it was Chris. She'd know how to deal with it.
>"Really. It was just a close call, that's all. Just scared me a little." Spot insisted.
"Right. But you're staying here tonight."

>Spot shook his head. "Jack, I can't. I've been away from Brooklyn too long as it is."
Jack looked at him hard, but nodded his head. "Just be careful, 'kay?"

>Spot nodded, then left.
"D'ya think he'll be okay?" Jack asked softly.

>Chris stared out the window for a long time before answering 'yes'.

>Spot paced the street under Chris's window. He'd liked her a lot before, but he'd never depended on her-on anyone-like this before. Frankly, he was scaring himself. Liking a girl was all good and
well but love? And yet, he couldn't stop himself. He couldn't stop seeing her. Spot honestly believed it might kill him if he did.

> Chris's voice floated down gently. "You woke me up, so you might as well come up. For a guy who can move silently, you sure are loud when you're nervous." Spot gratefully climbed up the drainpipe. Mornings out here were cold.
 "Who's nervous?" he asked with a tight attempt at a grin. Chris just gave him a patient look and held out her arms. What she wanted was a hug, but he decided that picking her up was just as good. She quietly told him to put her down, and to his surprise, Spot obeyed. He lay down on the bed, and Chris sat down beside him.

> "How are you holding up, Spot? Really, I mean. Don't lie to me."
 "Would I ever do that?"

> "Spot!"
 "I don't know, Chris. About all I know is that I need you-Jack too, but"

> "It's not the same." She finished for him. Spot nodded silently. Did she understand? Did she know how badly he really needed her? Maybe did she understand because she felt the same way? He looked up at her face, a dark profile against the rising sun. Her eyes sought and held his.
 "What are you more afraid of, Spot? Him finding you, making you go home, or me?" Chris asked softly.

> "You. Not really you, but losing you, never seeing you again . . .

. . that's what I'm most afraid of in the world, Chris. You know that."
 "This will NOT be one of those relations where the boy is the girl's slave and does everything for her 'cause he's afraid to lose her." Chris said sharply. "I feel the same way, Spot. If I ever lost you I'd go crazy or something. But let's not talk about that now."

> It was hard to get his mind off her. "What should we talk about, then?" Good. He's was getting some of his confidence-and a little sarcasm-back. At this rate he could even joke with the guys by noon. Pulling his attention back to Chris, he realized she was glaring at him. "I'm sorry, Chris, I really am." Spot put on his most pathetic "sad lost puppy" face. Despite herself, Chris laughed.
 "You jerk!" she said playfully, "I should kick you out of my room right now!"

> "Why don't you?"
 "Cause you haven't kissed me yet!" Chris pouted. Spot sat up and kissed her-several times.

> "Pardon my mistake. Better?"
 She thought about it a minute. "Almost." Which, of course, meant 'Not even, buster. Try again'. But kissing her wasn't exactly a chore. After a while, Chris pulled away, put her head on his shoulder, and summarily fell asleep. Or at least pretended to. Spot had a suspicion that she closed her eyes and enjoyed being held-but that was fine by him.

> Spot suddenly realized that he could here noise downstairs, and that the sun was up. Jack knocked on the trapdoor and yelled, "Are you two ready to leave yet?"
 "Whenever." Chris answered. And to him, "Now scram. I'll meet you downstairs."

> "Kay." After Spot'd left, Chris changed clothes and went out the window.

>
 "Come to Brooklyn with me?" Spot asked quietly as they walked.

>Chris shrugged. "Sure. Whatever."

>

>Sarra sighed enviously as she watched Spot and Chris walk together. "Do you know," she said to Jack, "how many girls would kill to have hair like that? And her face! Your sister's so beautiful, she makes me cry!"
Jack grinned. "You're not exactly plain yourself, Sarra. More'n one girl'd kill to look like you!"

>"You're just trying to make me feel better!"
 "Am not!" Jack protested. She just laughed. "Fine," he grumbled, "be that way. I gotta go

>now "
"Don't I even get a kiss?"

>Jack gave her one, then headed back to the newspaper office.

>

>As they walked down past Brooklyn, Spot sensed Chris stop and stare at a glittering beach under one of the docks. Dreamily, she began stepping out of her shoes. "I wouldn't," he advised quietly. "About half the glitter you see is broken glass."
"I know," she admitted softly. "Like the rest of New York, it's pretty, but if you touch it, you get hurt."

>Spot sighed. Unfortunately, what she'd said was true. "Maybe it'll be better someday," he offered. Chris shook her head.
"This is good old New York, Spot. If anything, it'll get worse."

>

>
The boys at Brooklyn got nervous when they saw Chris with Spot. How should they treat her?

>Yeah, she was the Boss's girl, but she was also Chris. She had seen most of New York City, and knew, if not all, most of its newsies by sight and name. She was their friend, their pal. The one they talked to when they had a problem.
 Chris was a smart girl. She knew full

well that if she wanted to remain a friend to them, she couldn't be thought of as 'the boss's girl'. She had to show them that she was Chris and Spot's girlfriend at the same time, that two people-herself and the girlfriend-were really one person.

>Scrub, a shy, dark-headed kid who couldn't be more than nine or ten, muttered "S'cuse me, ma'am," to Chris as she passed. Chris grinned. This was her chance.
"Y'know," she said casually, waving Spot on, "I could push you into the water for that. I'm still me, Scrub. You should know better than to think I'd change." Scrub blushed. And that was all it needed. The right words, making eye contact with the few who seemed to disbelieve her, and the Brooklyn newsies were back to their normal selves.

>
Someone whistled sharply. Chris ducked her head and made her way to Spot. She'd hung around Brooklyn too long not to know what that whistle meant. A scabber was coming . . . and she knew exactly who it was.

>They had had a good time today. True, the newsies-including Spot-had to work for a while, but it was Chris' day off, so she'd gone over to see Sarah. Then the boys had come back, late as usual. It was almost seven o'clock now, and the sun was going down, casting long purple shadows.
Spot was near the docks, leaning against the corner of a building. He'd wait for Oscar here. Chris slipped past him into the shadows. Spot started to protest-he wanted her far, far away from here, but Oscar's lean form heading towards them made him stop.

>"You want something, scab?" Spot asked, his eyes and face as cold as death.
"Yeah," Oscar replied, "I want my girl back." Spot didn't pretend ignorance-they both knew full well what Oscar was talking about.

>Spot grinned-humorless, mean, hard. Chris shuddered at the potential for violence. . . "You can take her back anytime you want, Oscar my friend . . . but only if you can get her to come to you."
"I know you've got her hidden around here somewhere, you piece of scum. She's probably locked up to make her stay put"

>"Oh come now," Spot scoffed. "You oughta know Chris better'n that. You think the boys would let her be locked up?" He hoped Chris would stay out of this. Oscar wouldn't hesitate to hurt her, and badly. He could sense her starting to move forward.
"Those boys are more scared of you than they care for her."

>"Oh, really?" Spot's right hand slowly moved to the top end of his stick, his weapon of choice. Half again as long as his forearm, it was shiny black, tipped with gold paint, and heavy-duty metal. His left hand drifted back to his slingshot. Oscar's hands moved to his own weapons: a short, heavy chain, and a small knife if things got close-quarters. Chris started moving forward. Spot cursed himself, and none too quietly. He'd known that if it came to a fight, she'd reveal herself. By drawing his weapons, Spot'd put her in danger. He moved to block her-too late. She slipped past him! Spot felt certain Oscar would hurt her, but his attention was all on Spot.
"Please you both know how much I hate fighting! Stop, please!" Chris pleaded to no avail. Spot and Oscar moved closer. Their eyes were hard. Chris attempted to move between them, and was pushed out of the way and held there by Mush.

>"You know there's no stopping it." he murmured to her.
Chris turned away from him. She moved away to a far part of the dock, behind a small shack, where she couldn't hear the fight . . . where she couldn't see Oscar walking or being carried home in defeat. Because she already knew how the fight would end. Oscar didn't have a chance. The boy was just too inexperienced. If he hadn't been upset over her, he would've backed down. He'd done so before.

>It couldn't have been more than ten or fifteen minutes later when she heard Spot coming. Oh, how she wanted to stay angry with him! But she couldn't bring herself to yell at him. Not over something like this.
Chris looked up. He was standing, half in shadow, keeping his distance, waiting for her to make the first move. A black eye . . . a three-inch cut across his cheek where Oscar's chain had connected. Not good, but not as bad as it could've been. Oscar was undoubtedly hurt worse.

> "You're not exactly happy, are you," he stated softly.
 She glanced away. "You know how much I hate fighting." He didn't answer. Finally Chris let her eyes wander back to his face. Spot was studying her intently, trying to judge how mad she really was. Chris sighed. "Come here, you jerk." Spot slowly moved towards her. He put his hands on her waist, and she absently noticed that his knuckles were bruised. He still kept her at arms length, not quite certain that she wasn't angry. "I'm not mad." She added gently. Spot turned his face away. She took his chin and turned it back, forcing him to look at her. She pulled closer, laying her head on his shoulder.

> He pressed his lips to her brow. "I'm sorry, Chris."
 "I know. Besides, how can I be mad at you for being what you are?"

> He shrugged and backed away again. Chris's eyes narrowed dangerously. "Who are you? What have you done with Spot? 'Cause the Spot Conlan I know-the Spot Conlan I love-would never treat me this way."
 "What would he do?" Despite all of Spot's efforts, a corner of his mouth twitched upwards.

> Chris moved close, closer, and closer still. Suddenly, it seemed to Spot that you couldn't get a piece of paper between them. "He would look mournful, and tell me he's sorry about getting into fights, but I would know he wasn't serious. And I wouldn't care, either. He would lose the repentant puppy dog face he was using to trick me, and then " Chris tilted her chin up, until their lips were almost touching. "And then, " she whispered directly down his throat, "he would kiss me." Spot shivered ever so slightly as goose bumps engulfed him.
 Chris started to pull away. "So I guess I'd better go find him, huh?"

> Spot growled. "Where do you think you're going?"
 "To find my Spot Conlan. Since I've obviously got the wrong guy."

> "Not anymore you don't. He's right here."
 "Well." Chris studied his face. "He already told me he's sorry, and he never did use that repentant puppy look yeah, I guess it is him."

> Spot raised his eyebrows. "Wasn't there another item on the list?"
 Chris frowned. "I'm sure it wasn't important. What was it?"

> "This." He leaned forward and kissed her, timidly at first, then harder, more passionately. When he knew he could stand no more without betraying her virtue, he backed away.
 An impertinent smile played across her lips as she moved closer, backing Spot into one of the docking piers. He jerked when he hit it. "Are you so afraid of me, love?" Chris asked innocently as Spot held up his hands, palms out, to keep her at bay.

> "Afraid of you? No, Chris," Spot added softly as he drew her near, pressing her face into his shoulder, "I'm afraid for you. I could hurt you Chris, and badly. You know it's true."
 "Yes. But I also know that you won't. "

> <p><p>

End
file.